

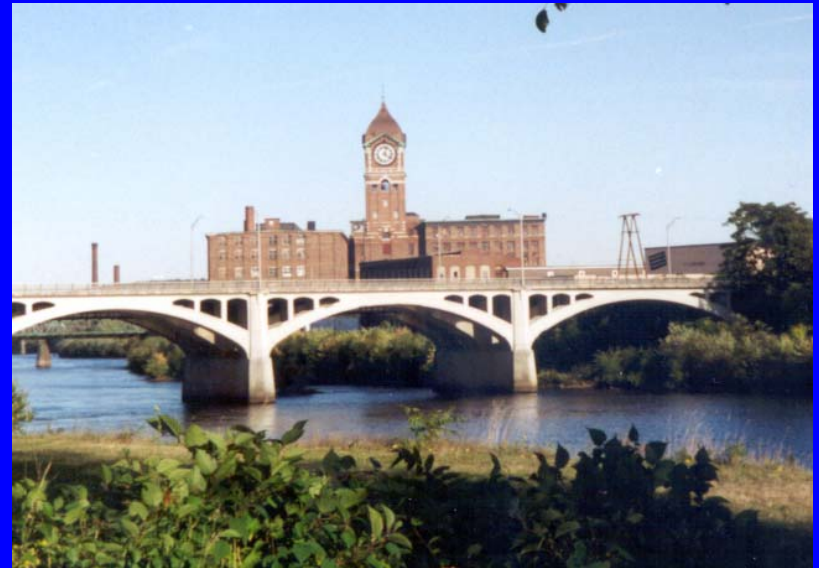
# Casa de Salud: A Model For Engaging Community in Lawrence Massachusetts, USA



JSI Center For Environmental Health  
Studies

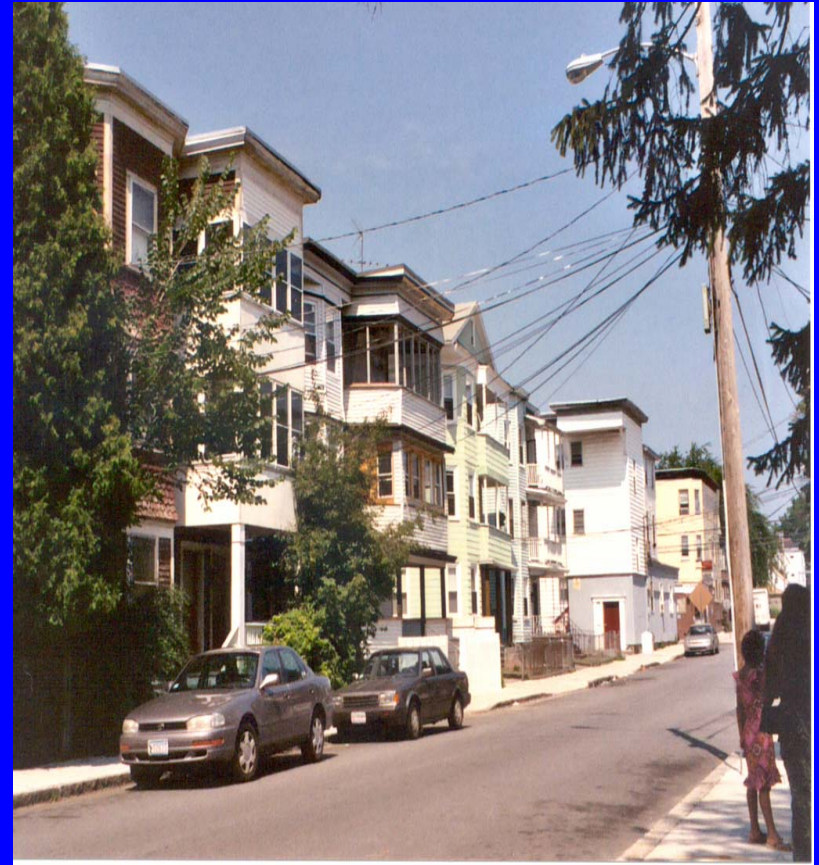
# Demographics

- Oldest planned industrial city in the United States
- History of drawing immigrant populations from around the world



# Demographics

- Population is 72,000
- Land area is 6.5 square miles
- One of the 25 poorest cities in the US
- Average income is less than \$13,000
- 70% of the housing was built in the early 1900s
- 70% is rental property



# Children's Environmental Health Issues

- Lead levels in children are 3 times the state rate – the highest in Massachusetts
- Pediatric asthma affects more than 14% of school age children
- Schools report high rates of children with learning disabilities





# Environmental Justice Issues

- Environmental justice community
- Acres of abandoned mill buildings
- 45 auto body shops operate in residential neighborhoods



# Environmental Justice Issues

- 5 incinerators operated in a 4.5 square mile area
- Emitted high levels of mercury and other toxic chemicals
- Fish contain highest mercury levels in Massachusetts



# Environmental Health Issues

- Residents use elemental mercury for religious and cultural purposes
- This finding was key to validate mutual education approaches



# Barriers to Residents Involvement

- Barriers of language, literacy, culture, education, economics, and documentation
- Don't know where to go for help
- Don't know their rights





# Barriers to Residents Involvement

- Learned to live with their poor environment



# Program Goals

- Engage the Latino community
- Study the effectiveness of home-based and neighborhood-based meetings



# Objectives

- Organize monthly *charlas* in highly stressed neighborhoods
- Develop neighborhood tools to address residents' concerns



# Objectives

- Increase mutual understanding among residents, health care providers, and environmental health scientists





# Objectives

- Develop culturally and linguistically appropriate community-based interventions to increase residents' knowledge of environmental health issues



# Mission and Approach

- Hire a Spanish speaking resident to serve as Community Outreach Coordinator



# Mission and Approach

- Hire and train 10 residents to serve as Casa Leaders
- Conduct monthly *charlas* in highly stressed neighborhoods



# Mission and Approach

- *Charlas* provide sites for interaction among residents, health providers, and environmental health scientists
- Residents outnumber experts and neighborhood culture is dominant
- Provide an opportunity to learn from each other



# Priority Issues Identified by Residents

- Trash
- Pesticides
- Indoor air issues -  
asthma, lead, mercury
- Tenants rights



# Priority Issues

- Air Pollution - auto body shops, trucks, and busses



# Outcomes

- Scientists and health providers learned to relate to residents needs
- Learned to develop programs based on what residents told us they wanted to know
- Residents became better informed about environmental health issues
- Learned to advocate for their own health and environment

# Charla Evaluation - Years 1- 4

- *Charlas* held for 1400 residents
- 70% female, 30% male
- Ages ranged from 10-65
- 83% are concerned about environmental health issues
- 67% have talked with a friend about their concerns



# Charla Evaluation - Years 1- 4

- 82% never attended a public meeting on environmental health issues
- 80% never called a public official about their concerns
- 99% felt the *charla* was a good location to get information
- 96% felt the Casa Leaders explained issues well

# Charla Evaluation - Year 1- 4

- 99% gained knowledge about environmental health issues
- 97% were more hopeful that they could make a difference in changing the environment in Lawrence and better protect their children's health

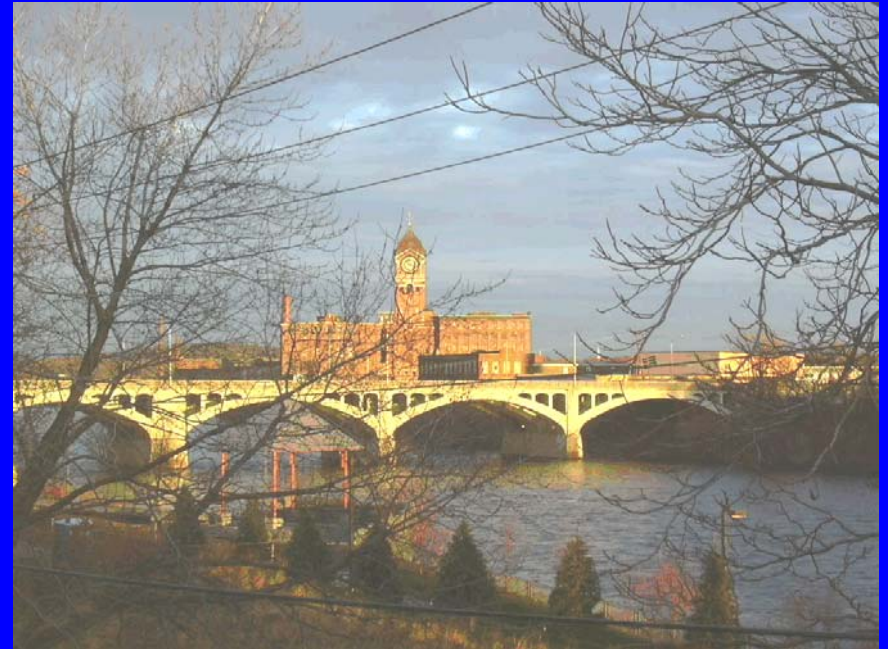
# Keys to Success

- Hired and trained residents to be community leaders
- Conduct programs in language of the community
- Hold meetings in the neighborhood
- Start with the community



# Project Partners

- JSI Center For Environmental Health Studies
- Family Service, Inc.
- Greater Lawrence Family Health Center





Casa de Salud is a project of the National Institutes  
of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) funded  
by the United States Environmental Protection  
Agency (EPA)  
Office of Research and Development,  
Washington, DC, USA

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